(a) whether Government have set up a panel for fixing up different time zones in the country;

(b) if so, the basis of selection of the panel;

(c) whether any specific recommendation has been given to the panel in respect of the number of time zones, the geographical division and the base of local time zone of the division;

(d) whether any earlier research finding in this regard is available; and

(e) by when, the report of the panel is expected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT) : (a) to (e) Government has constituted a Committee with Secretary, DST as Chairman and other experts in the subject to look into various aspects of adopting different time zones in the country and provide necessary recommendations. The Committee has received inputs from the National Physical Laboratory, which has been conducting research and development relating to time including considerations for fixing time zones. The Committee has also had access to studies which have been conducted regarding the implication of adopting dual time zones and its impact. Several other inputs in the form of deliberations of earlier Committees and other facts relating to fixing of standard time and the basis thereof were available to the Committee. Based on the inputs the Committee has commenced the process of finalizing its recommendations.

Cloning by CCMB

303. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH : Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad has embarked upon a project to apply the DNA technology and reproductive biology technology for socially relevant problems;

(b) whether the Scientists at the centre have taken up a project to clone extinct animals like cheetah; and

(c) if so, the details of the project and the progress made so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT) : (a) The Centre for Cellular and Molecular

Biology, Hyderabad has taken up a project entitled "Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LACONES)" to develop and apply modern methods of DNA technology and reproductive biology technology for socially relevant problems related to conservation of endangered species of animals. The main objectives of the project are to study the genetic variability in the endangered wild animals of India, to develop molecular probes for genotyping of the animals and to develop assisted reproductive technologies to facilities increase in their numbers by human intervention, if the situation demands.

(b) and (c)Centre has not been able to take up cloning of Cheetah because living tissue of Cheetah are not available in India. Efforts are being made to procure Cheetah/living tissue of Cheetah from Iran through the Central Zoo Authority of India as Cheetah found in Iran is very similar to Indian Cheetah. The question of cloning of Cheetah will arise only if suitable living material of Cheetah becomes available.

Relaxations for public sector steel companies

†304. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA' : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the concessions announced last year by Government have not benefited the public sector steel companies, as expected;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of steps taken to improve the conditions of Rourkela Steel Plant?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) and (b) The Govt. of India, in Feb., 2000 has approved a financial and business restructuring package for Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) with a view to making it viable and profitable. This proposal, *inter alia*, includes divestment of non-core assets of SAIL including conversion of Indian Iron and Steel Co. (IISCO), a loss making subsidiary of SAIL, into a joint venture. This restructuring package also includes (i) waiver of loans from Steel Development Fund (SDF) and from Govt. of India, (ii) provision of Govt. guarantee of Rs.1500 crore with 50% interest subsidy for financing reduction in manpower through VRS and (iii) Govt. guarantee for loan and interest thereon of Rs.1500 crore for meeting repayment obligation.

As a result of restructuring proposals approved by Govt. losses for the year 2000-01 has been cut down by about 58% of the previous year loss.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.